

September 12, 2018

Commissioner Brendan Carr  
Federal Communications Commission  
[445 12th Street, SW](#)  
[Washington, DC 20554](#)

*Re: Accelerating Wireless Broadband Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Investment, WT Docket No. 17-79; Streamlining Deployment of Small Cell Infrastructure by Improving Wireless Siting Policies, WT Docket No. 16-421*

Dear Commissioner Carr:

The Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) recently released '*Connected Care Pilot Program*' has the potential to provide much needed accessible healthcare for rural, veteran, and low-income communities who currently have few or no options for reliable healthcare services.

Programs like these, however, are reliant on access to high-speed broadband networks. One of the barriers that still remain in accessing these technologies are regulatory barriers impeding the construction of high-speed networks. Rural Americans strongly support the FCC's actions to bring a more commonsense approach to wireless siting policies.

Nearly 30 million Americans don't live within an hour of trauma care. Further, 16% of Americans residing in mainland United States are 30 miles or more away<sup>i</sup> from the nearest hospital. As Congress continues to tighten the belt on rural hospital funding<sup>ii</sup>, these numbers will only continue to increase.

Doctors across the country are bringing specialist care to rural communities via broadband connections to decrease the dependency on opioids and other drugs and to help address a number of critical mental health issues. And there is evidence that telemedicine consults with high-risk mothers result in an almost 40 percent reduction in the amount of infant days in the neonatal intensive care unit.

As a first responder, I have witnessed the benefits of having access to high-speed, reliable rural broadband. Mostly though, I have dealt with the drawbacks of working with outdated technology. Access to high-speed broadband would greatly increase my ability to seamlessly share information across my team and communicate under all conditions.

The Commission is on the right path by making telemedicine a priority and pushing for commonsense reform of wireless siting regulatory processes. The current system prevents the deployment of innovative healthcare solutions, harming those individuals that need them the most.

Lowering regulatory barriers, including high siting fees, delays, and restrictions, will directly reduce deployment costs in rural areas, making it feasible to expand to previously unserved or underserved communities. Lowering regulatory costs in urban areas will also spur more rural deployment because providers will have additional capital available to spend.

Telehealth and other new technologies provide rural residents the opportunity to speak remotely with highly-qualified doctors and seek out suitable healthcare.

The Commission should continue taking necessary actions to encourage the construction of expanded broadband networks that are needed to support critical programs that are essential to the health and prosperity of rural America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lonnie Gilbert", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lonnie Gilbert

First Responder

National Black Growers Council Member

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<sup>i</sup> (Ostroff, 2017) *Millions of Americans live nowhere near a hospital, jeopardizing their lives*  
<https://www.cnn.com/2017/08/03/health/hospital-deserts/index.html>

<sup>ii</sup> (Devin, 2018) *Cuts to the 340B program threaten rural hospitals*  
<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/op-eds/cuts-to-the-340b-program-threaten-rural-hospitals>